

1998 CROP SUMMARY

CORN AND SOYBEAN CROP RECORD HIGHS

The mild winter of 97-98 throughout the state was appreciated by most as the harsh winter of the year before was still on many Minnesotans' minds. The lack of snow, quite different from the year before, worried many alfalfa growers concerned about winter-kill. The late part of March brought many tornadoes and much destruction to the southern part of the state as many farmers were forced to clear their fields of debris in early April. Planting progress for the state was ahead of the 5-year average due to favorable planting conditions during the month of April. Alfalfa growers' earlier suspicions of winterkill proved to be false as much of the crop survived the dormancy period well.

The early part of May saw unseasonably high temperatures and drier weather. The favorable climate led to the greatest percentage of corn planted in early May compared with records dating back to 1956. Minnesota had a very rare 100-degree temperature recorded in Redwood Falls on Monday, May 18th. Planting and emergence records were being broken for most crops during the month of May as crop progress was about two weeks ahead of normal throughout the state. Most of the state was provided with adequate amounts of moisture except for the southwest corner of the state and the east central counties, which started showing signs of dryness.

The first two weeks of June were cooler than normal, with the central part of the state experiencing some frost damage. Crop progress was still above normal with alfalfa cutting completed on an estimated 74% of the acreage, well ahead of the 5-year average of 18%. The last two weeks of June gave above normal rainfall over most of the state, except for the southwest corner which remained dry. The extra rainfall hurt alfalfa that couldn't get put up in time. It also hurt the small grains by causing lodging problems in the south and disease problems in the Red River Valley. June ended with crop progress slipping a little over the month, but still ahead of normal.

The old saying, "knee high by the 4th of July," definitely didn't apply to the 1998 growing season with an estimated 3% of the acreage tasseled by the first week of July. Many areas of Minnesota had good weather for growing crops during the month of July. The northwest had too much rain and reports of scab came in from the area. The end of July saw a good start to the small grain harvest, along with damaging wind and hail to corn and soybean crops through Brown and Nicollet Counties.

Drier conditions prevailed over much of the state during the early part of August. Pastures in the middle part of the state were very short of moisture. Rainfall at the end of August helped row crops that remained two weeks ahead of average. Many crops were ahead of schedule, with the harvest of small grains coming to a close, the early start of potato and dry bean harvest,

and the start of winter wheat and rye seeding in late August. A fourth cutting of alfalfa was possible in certain areas.

By mid September, after many weeks of warm, dry weather, corn was getting too dry for silage. Row crop harvest was far ahead of schedule during the month of September. The warm weather slowed the harvesting of potatoes.

Harvest slowed a little during the early part of October, but many producers were able to keep their equipment going. Producers enjoyed excellent field-drying conditions as corn moisture content averaged about 18-19%, much lower than the 5-year average of 25-28%. The end of October brought the near completion of the sugarbeet harvest, with 95% completed.

In November, large corn piles could be seen in many parts of the state. Subsoil moisture conditions for the end of the season were slightly better than 1997.

The following is a rundown on the production of Minnesota's major crops for 1998:

Minnesota's record CORN production at 1.03 billion bushels was up 13% from the previous record set in 1994. Yield at a record 153.0 bushels per acre was up 11 bushels from the previous record set in 1994.

SOYBEAN production was a record 285.6 million bushels, up 12% from the previous record set in 1997. Yield was a record 42.0 bushels per acre, up 1.5 bushels from the previous record set in 1995.

SPRING WHEAT production totaled 78.7 million bushels, up 5% from 1997. Yield at 41 bushels per acre was up 9 bushels from 1997.

BARLEY production of 22.8 million bushels was down 3% from 1997. Yield at 55 bushels was up 4 bushels from 1997.

The SUGARBEET crop was a record production of 9.71 million tons, up 15% from the previous record set in 1994. Yield was a record 21.2 tons per acre, up 0.6 tons from the previous record set in 1994.

CANOLA production totaled 304.5 million pounds, more than double the 1997 level. Canola growers planted 220,000 acres in 1998 and harvested 210,000 acres. State-level canola data are being published under a cooperative agreement with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture.